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## THE TROUBLE IN MEXICO



These are the real sufferers in troubled Mexico. A typical poor and ignorant peon and his family.

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Types of Mexican fighters, soldiers or bandits, depending on the political status of their leader at the time.

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*Emeterio de la Garza, the writer of the following article, is a Mexican lawyer of international reputation and has held important public offices. He is considered a man of broad and temperate views and not committed to any faction. For twelve years he was a member of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, serving in all six terms. As a commissioner of the Government of Mexico he visited the United States and China to study monetary reforms. In view of his wide experience his views on the Mexican situation should be of especial interest.*

By EMETERIO DE LA GARZA.

I FEEL that nothing can prevent war between Mexico and the United States. The situation which confronts us is the culmination of all our errors and of the mistakes of the Government of the United States.

A native of Mexico, I represent no party, class, sect or faction. I am free from personal rivalries and sectional interests. My entire political life has been given to the study of Mexico's arduous and vexed affairs, to the national and international problems of Mexico as a whole, as a country, as a state and as a republic.

May I then discuss with the people of the United States the situation as I see it as a Mexican and as one who is now living on American soil?

Mexico in 1910 was a peaceful and prosperous country. Her mines were in bonanza, agriculture flourished, industries were growing, railroads were making gains, banks were paying dividends, houses, offices, palaces and monuments were being erected in every city. Copious crops of cereals filled our granaries and everywhere were falling flowers and money.

Mexico city was a brilliant festival; life was light and gay, the decorated streets were crowded, society banded itself in balls and receptions, the stores had sold out their stocks of jewels, of Paris gowns and millinery to Mexican magnificence. The press was a hymn, poets sang verses to the glory of Mexico, orators lifted their voices in praise, philosophers predicted welfare, scientists gave assurance of material success. A \$22,000,000 opera house was inaugurated and a \$25,000,000 Capitol was built.

The Government was lawful and strong, the Treasury had a gold surplus, all obligations were met before maturity and our bonds were sold at a premium. Within our borders foreigners came and went in safety and prosperity. Mexico invited all the world to the apotheosis of her independence. Delegations from every civilized nation joined with her in celebrating her marvellous achievements. It was decreed that a whole month should be set aside for national rejoicing, and at the head of this glorious expedition was Porfirio Diaz, the peace maker.

Six months pass. As in the theatre the scene is changed after a moment of darkness, so in Mexico. The old and powerful government had fallen, the giant Diaz was in exile in Paris, at the remote castle of Chapultepec little, spiritualistic Madero, half epileptic, half crazy, without malice or generosity, weak, amiable and incompetent, was dictating orders which none would obey and at which all laughed. Big men had shrunk so that they could hardly be seen; poor insignificant fellows climbed on pedestals; trees, like those of the Japanese gardens, became very small; swords were cut in twain to serve as daggers. Everything and everybody had to be lowered to the new level. Minds, consciences, dress, even meals had to be democratized. That Mexico might appreciate the taste, the odor, the odor of a new democracy! Then came war, bankruptcy, wholesale destruction and ruin.

What has happened; why and how did all this come to be? Before I came to the United States I had been commissioned by the central Government when there was government in Mexico—to visit the capitals of twenty-two Mexican States and to

confer with their officials. They, one and all, discussed with me the necessities of our country and the terms of permanent peace and union. If any one is able, then, to speak of the conditions in Mexico as seen by her people I feel that I am qualified.

Civil strife in Mexico is not, then, really due to the personal quarrels and the mistakes of those men whose names we see every day in the newspapers, though it may appear to be so on the surface. The trouble is greater and grows deeper. It is national in its scope and ancient in its origin. The personal situation has nothing to do with it.

Revolution is the result, not the cause, of our misfortunes. The people of Mexico, like other peoples, have the tendency to personify with names of men the factions in every conflict. The strife in Mexico is of class against class, and whether or not one man is defeated or this town is lost or that won or whether or not ephemeral victories come, has little to do with our troubles; that will not help us nor restore stable government and order to Mexico.

Two opposite principles are at war. Therefore the pacification of Mexico cannot be accomplished at the mouth of cannon nor by the confiscation of all property nor by the wronging of all women nor by the firing squad for all men.

The situation in Mexico to-day is such that it cannot be righted except by the passage of agrarian laws. Revolutions and counter revolutions cannot improve the State any more than fevers can strengthen the body. Not until the small agriculturist has his opportunity to make a living by getting land and the economic conditions are thus improved can there ever be peace and order, nor can the difficulties between Mexico and the United States be resolved.

The trouble with Mexico, then, is a land problem. Twelve millions of agrarian Indians are deprived of homesteads in their own territory. Hence an intense financial crisis, hence official corruption, whether by Constitutionalist or by Cientifico grafters, it matters not. Here we have economical tyranny—low wages, little work. I defy anybody to form a government and to pacify a country of paupers dying of hunger, thirst and exposure. I defy anybody to do away with poverty without dividing the land and changing economic conditions.

Do you suppose that the men now living the irresponsible lives of soldiers on two pesos a day, with rifles and horses at their disposal, drinking and looting, winning what they call honors and glory, with no law to obey and no authority to respect and no limitations to their daring, will return to a peonage system which is worse than slavery—to work for fifty centavos a day?

The trouble, then, is not of men but of conditions. It is the culmination of errors, religious, political, social and financial. We Mexicans cannot remedy these conditions by fighting either among ourselves or with a foreign country. We can go on fighting for the next twenty-five years in Mexico; we may continue to waste blood and treasure and when all is over we shall have the same problem to solve. Therefore, whether Villa be dead or alive, whether Obregon be loyal or not, whether Carranza be in Mexico city or out of it, whether Zapata be pro or anti American, whether the Constitutionalist army proceed to the east or the west—such local and personal matters cannot help us to the solution.

Let us consider that in a population of 15,000,000 in Mexico at least 85 per cent. are Indians and that half are illiterate and with scant or no real information about the situation. They know little except the statements which are spread abroad by demagogues. I believe that in their hearts 99 per cent. of the population of Mexico and 99 per cent. of the people of the United States do not want war. There is no reason for war between the United States and Mexico. Such was not the case in 1847. Then Texas, a great and rich State, had been segregated from Mexico and annexed to the United States. Such a large territory could not be passed



EMETERIO DE LA GARZA.

over without a struggle. But now we are pushed into war by the acts and the doings of bandits, of rascals and criminals whom the people of Mexico have never accepted as their representatives and whom they have always rejected as such. The people of Mexico have never by any authority or vote or election given the right to such miscreants to act for them.

Cynical as it may sound to say it, comical as it might be—and tragic too—these men have no status and no authority except that given to them by the United States when it recognized them as constituting a de facto government. I have read the history of the world and I have found no case either before the Christian era or after Christ in which any nation ever recognized an army as a government—an army of looters, of wild animals, of undisciplined followers, an army with no laws, no constitution, no congress, no courts, no programme, no flag!

I am sorry that now there seems nothing else to do but to pay the penalty for the continuous blunders in the Mexican situation which have followed closely upon one another ever since President Wilson took the oath of office. To prove my

statement I would call attention to what I wrote in a letter to Mr. Wilson as far back as 1913. May I quote from it as follows:

"Your Excellency will be kind enough to permit me to say that the people of the United States should not be surprised by nor alarmed over the present conditions in Mexico, since they and we foresaw them years ago. During the last five years of the ex-President's rule there was but one question here and there concerning Mexico. 'After Diaz, What?' We all knew and predicted that something extraordinary would follow the retirement of Gen. Diaz.

"It could not be otherwise after a vigorous personal government of thirty-five years. Trouble had to come. That which now occurs in my country is a natural consequence of Diaz's long and absolute dictatorship. All prepared for these disturbances. Diplomatic agents, commercial agents, everybody interested in Mexico reported to their friends and principals that some great and sudden change would then occur.

"You may safely rely upon the inborn national pride and patriotism of Mexico and we hope that you may wisely aid us with your good will and

national support. There is room for neither surprise nor alarm. Really the American people, whom I regard as the most fair and just of peoples, should not listen to or encourage these Mexicans, who, misguided or misinformed, are led to forget their duty to their Government and their country, and who, regardless of the havoc they have done and are doing, we cordially invite to return to their allegiance and unite for the best good of Mexico."

In this letter I laid special stress upon the long recognized agrarian problems and the fact that a new Department of Agriculture had been established for the very purpose of solving that problem. A bank designed for the purpose of promoting agriculture had been established and at the time I wrote it was engaged in buying up large tracts of land and dividing them into small parcels and selling them to the working people on very easy terms, with exemption from all taxes.

Whatever may have been the faults of the Huerta regime, it was certainly a strong government. Gen. Huerta had 80,000 troops under arms and was in control of twenty-five out of twenty-seven States. The United States landed its forces at Vera Cruz, eventually overthrew the government of Carranza and builded nothing in its stead.

At that time Carranza was at Sonora, with no money, no followers, no chance in the world. The Administration blockaded Huerta politically, financially and morally and day by day it helped Carranza. The attitude of the United States toward Mexico has been destructive rather than constructive. It overthrew a government and then withdrew.

I would not shift the responsibility upon this nation; but how much better it would have been if in the days of our distress, when the United States saw us sinking into oceans of blood, into an abyss of anarchy, it should have offered to us the co-operation of a bigger and a wiser brother. If, then, the problems of Mexico are brought on by ignorance, by economic blunders, by religious fanaticism, how much better would it have been for the United States to have sent into Mexico instead of rifles and ammunition the book and the Bible, to have planted in our midst instead of the military tent the school house and sent to us teachers instead of soldiers.

However, as I see it now, there is nothing to prevent war between this country and Mexico. There seem no issues by which to avoid a struggle. Those with whom the United States is dealing do not represent the Mexican people. You cannot expect an Indian to cooperate with you in catching another Indian; one cannot expect a dog to catch another dog, a wolf to take a wolf.

Stories are spread among ignorant followers that it will be possible to capture the cities of the United States and to possess its territory. One must bear in mind that where millions cannot even read the newspaper and the book they can have no idea of the power of such a nation as is the United States.

And suppose, now that the United States intervenes, that American forces take Mexico. Nothing can be done to restore peace and give order but to correct those abuses which have been growing all these years. Economic reforms must come or it will be the same story all over again. The agricultural resources of Mexico must be recognized and the people must have their opportunity to develop them.

Mexico has always been considered a silver producing country. I venture to assert, however, that if half the capital hitherto invested in the exploitation of mineral resources had been used for the development of agriculture she would be more prosperous and more peaceful than she is to-day. What has been accomplished in the South, East and West of the United States may be successfully done in the vast lands of Mexico.

Any Government which may be established in Mexico, whether organized by the Mexicans them-

selves, as I hope, or by the United States, will have to tackle that problem as the first act of its administration. Discontentment and trouble could be avoided by the immediate adoption of agrarian reforms.

If a decent Government be established in Mexico, peace be assured and economic conditions be made as favorable as they are elsewhere, immigrants will rush to Mexican ports and a new era will begin.

After the European war is over there will be so much poverty and misery on the old continent that the stricken peoples will be looking for new lands on which to settle. They will be glad to live in Mexico if she can offer to them a new type of Mexican, healthy, good and prosperous citizen, such as immigration has created in the Argentine and in the United States. The people who would come from foreign lands, by associating with the Mexicans and by intermarriage, would be a factor for improvement. Therefore, I would see the broad lands of Mexico divided, but without confiscation, and I would see American and European immigration share our marvellous wealth.

Of course Mexico must be financed anew in order to come out of her present state. The economic conditions are almost hopeless and would be entirely so if we did not have faith in the almost inexhaustible wealth of the country. Years of continued civil strife, with the inevitable paralysis of all productive resources, the emigration of men and money, the great expense of different factional armies and their war supplies, the wholly destructive methods of warfare have been ruinous. There is no specie or metallic money in circulation. Even the familiar copper cents have disappeared.

The three principal factions—those of Carranza, Villa and Zapata—some small bands of armed men, railroads, tramways, factories, department stores and even individuals have used paper currency which is received at varying rates of exchange, which are sometimes as high as 25 or 30 to 1, and are even as high as 500 to 1.

Each faction as it gains control of territory declares the currency issued by other factions counterfeit and void and enforces the circulation of its own paper. By robbery and money lending the poor classes are exploited. No taxes are paid, rents cannot be collected, the sale of property to foreigners is prohibited. We are on the eve of a chronic famine and a state of bankruptcy. The agony is prolonged by fresh issues of paper money and Carranza cannot find any remedy but the punishment of his enemies and the death penalty for business traitors.

Indians and peons, the middle classes and the upper classes as well are starving, while the "patron" class, those noisy patriots who are shouting but the democratic welfare and the happiness of the people, "the people that must be saved from themselves"—are enriching themselves rapidly; they loot every city and confiscate every kind of property; they expropriate the loot for gold, which they export and deposit in American banks to insure the future, that day when they will flee from Mexico to an easy and luxurious life abroad.

Such are the conditions in my distressed country. Come what may, and whatever the United States may do, the ills of the body politic in Mexico must be cured before peace will rest like a benison upon us. All my life I have longed to see political, economic and social reforms introduced into Mexico without bloodshed, without violence, without disrespect to the paramount rights of mankind. Before Madero came into political activity, even while Diaz was omnipotent, I wrote a book on this subject which no publisher dared print for fear of the Government. I had 1,000 copies mimeographed and distributed among my friends who have come from Mexico to an easy and luxurious life abroad.

I am willing to do all in my power to carry out those principles in which I so earnestly believe, but not through death, devastation and, what is more, loss of nationality. I am not in favor of anarchy in politics, of atheism in religion, of bankruptcy in finance, of isolation in patriotism, of death to foreigners and domination to the outside world. The murders and the outrages which have come have been carried on solely through hatred in a savage war in which there is no respect for age, sex, life or property—a war against civilization, progress and mankind, with no object or result but to re-establish barbarism.

Even now, when one knows not what the day may bring forth or when peace will come, to our borders, I look forward to that time when Mexico and the United States may better know each other. Nature has placed the two lands side by side and they should ever dwell together in accord. It is my hope that the two peoples will learn to understand each other in the long years to come.